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24 May 1985CAIRO BOMB PLOT  
SAID TO BE FOILED

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Special to The New York Times

CAIRO, May 23 — Egypt's Interior Ministry said today it had "thwarted a plot" involving Libya and a Syrian-based terrorist group to detonate a truck bomb at an embassy here. It did not identify the target of the purported plot, but the police and other Egyptian officials said it was the United States Embassy.

The Foreign Ministry said that it sealed off Cairo's embassy row on Wednesday to guard against the possibility of an attack on an alternate target.

The Ministry asserted in a statement that a "Libyan intelligence official" living in a "third country" had recruited an agent to "set off an explosion inside the country in return for \$500,000 in the event of success."

It said that a "terrorist organization with headquarters on Syrian territory" had trained the agent and given him instructions on how and when to carry out the truck-bomb attack.

"The agent was instructed by the leadership of the organization in Damascus — instructions that were legally recorded — to carry out the operation alone by using the booby-trapped car" at 2 P.M. on Wednesday, the statement said.

## A Peak Traffic Hour

The statement said that "the time, one of the peak traffic hours, was selected so that the largest number of people would be hit in the explosion."

The Ministry statement said that "although the operation was under the full control of security authorities, it was decided to take full security measures to protect the area where the targeted embassy is located."

"This was to guard against the possibility of an alternative sabotage plan to be carried out in the event the original plan was discovered," the statement continued.

Interior Ministry officials permitted a small group of photographers to take pictures of the green Czechoslovak-made Skoda pickup truck that they said had been intended for use as the truck bomb.

Ministry officials also displayed to Egyptian photographers, but did not play, a videotape cassette that they maintained contained the taped conversations between the Syrian-based terrorist group and the agent it had trained to carry out the operation.

## Further Comment Declined

But Interior Ministry officials, for what one called "reasons of security," declined to expand upon the statement or answer any of the many questions raised by it.

The statement, for example, did not identify the Libyan intelligence official, the purported agent, the third country in which he had been recruited, or the Syrian-based terrorist organization that had trained and instructed him. It did not say whether the agent had been arrested.

One Egyptian official said, however, that the agent was "in good hands," implying that he had been detained.

The statement also provided only a few details about how Egypt had learned of the plot and foiled it.

According to the Interior Ministry's account, Egyptian officials first learned of the plot last November.

On April 20, the statement said, the agent arrived by ship in Alexandria with "a car in which was found highly explosive plastic explosives" that weighed 185 pounds, in addition to 15 detonating devices and 15 yards of fuses.

## Explosives Hidden in Tires

The explosives, detonators and fuses were hidden in the tires and in other unidentified parts of the car, the statement continued.

According to the statement, Egyptian customs police did not arrest the driver but monitored his movements from then on.

The agent then went to Damascus, Syria, where he was trained extensively in the use of timed explosives, the statement recounted.

He later returned to Egypt with a code for contacting the terrorist group in Damascus, which he did, and was taped by the Egyptian police, the statement said.

The statement added that Egyptian officials were in contact with the government of the country in which the Libyan intelligence official resides, "to take legal measures in view of the Libyan's proven involvement," the statement said.

It was the fourth time in less than a year that Cairo had accused Libya of attempting to foment terrorism in Egypt. Last summer, Egyptian officials said they suspected Libyan involvement in the mining of waters in the Gulf of Suez and the Red Sea to disrupt shipping through Egypt's Suez Canal. Egyptian officials also accused Libya of attempting to bomb the strategic Aswan Dam in southern Egypt.

Last November, Egypt's Interior Ministry announced that it had foiled a Libyan plot to assassinate Abdel-Hamid Bakoush, a former Prime Minister living in Egypt and a key opponent of the Libyan leader, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. Libya's official Tripoli Radio announced on Nov. 16 that Mr. Bakoush had been killed, but the next day the Egyptians produced him unharmed at a news conference and showed how they had faked his assassination to embarrass Libya.

American installations have faced growing threats from terrorism throughout the Middle East, but especially in Beirut. In two separate attacks on the United States Embassy in Beirut, in April 1983 and September 1984, a total of 19 Americans and between 58 and 68 others were killed. In October, 1983, 241 American servicemen were killed in a suicide truck-bomb attack on the marine garrison in Beirut.